



January 2006

Seasonal Student Issues

There's a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here are a few thoughts on what your student may be experiencing this winter.

January

- ➔ Feeling happy and/or restless after the holiday break
- ➔ Missing family and friends back home
- ➔ Glad to be reunited with campus friends
- ➔ Resolving to do better academically
- ➔ New leadership opportunities may be available for emerging leaders
- ➔ Renewed interest in classes
- ➔ Unwanted weight gain after the holidays
- ➔ Cold weather blues (in some areas of the country)
- ➔ Possible roommate changes
- ➔ Thinking about where they'll live during the 2006-07 academic year



The Housing Dilemma: "Where Should I Live?"

A place to hang your hat—we know how important that sense of place is. And at this time of year, many students are beginning to figure out their place for the upcoming year. Where will they call home in the fall?

As students struggle to answer "Where should I live?" they will likely face the following concerns:

- **WHO?** Who should I live with? Is it healthy for my current roommate and I to keep rooming together? Do I want to try living with a group? What if I can't find anyone who wants to share a space with me? Will my friends and I remain friends if we live together?
- **WHERE?** If I live on campus next year, what environment would be best? Should I live in a campus apartment, a suite, a theme house or somewhere else? If I live off campus, should I live with my family? Or should I get a place with some friends? How far away from campus do I want to be? Will I still be able to be involved with activities that are important to me?

- **HOW?** How will I pay for my housing next year? Do I have enough for the deposit that's required now? Where will I store my belongings during the summer? Do I need to find separate housing for the summer? What will I do about a meal plan? Will I need to get a job?

If your student wants to talk through the options with you, pose the above questions to help him or her look at the big picture. It's not just about holing up with three of their best buddies in an off-campus apartment or an on-campus suite. It's about how this decision will impact other areas of your student's life, from involvement to finances to wellness and beyond. Home sweet home... it's a big decision.

It's Your Student's Responsibility

Many on-campus lotteries occur between January and March. Encourage your student to attend informational meetings and ask questions now to learn about this process. He or she will feel much more prepared. It's up to your student to follow campus housing procedures in order to secure housing for next year. If he/she doesn't understand the process, there are people who can help such as RAs and residence hall directors. Students need to be proactive and informed in order to make the housing system work in their favor!



Academically Speaking

Now that your student has the fall semester under her belt, she's likely looking toward what the spring will bring. Will her classes be tough? Is she on academic warning or probation? Are there classes she's really looking forward to?

The reality of how she did academically last fall has likely sunk in with your student by now. She knows where her challenges are and she has confidence in other areas. You can help her succeed academically by understanding the issues that are foremost on her mind. These may include:

- How can I bring up my GPA this semester?
- Are any of my academic scholarships in jeopardy?
- What subjects do I need help with?
- Can I keep my grades up so I'm eligible for admission to my major/certain scholarships/Dean's list?
- I need to declare my major soon—what should I choose?
- How can I make it through my tough classes this semester?
- Will I still be able to be on the _____ team?
- Should I stay in the Honors program?
- I think I might have a learning disability or test anxiety—where can I get help?
- How am I doing in staying on a four-year graduation track?
- Am I completing the general education requirements needed for graduation in a timely manner?
- Do I need to retake any classes?
- What professors inspire me and can I get into more of their classes?

If your student didn't do that well during the fall semester, there's no need to lose hope. She will have to

buckle down and work smart this semester, of course. Yet, there are many resources available on campus to help her in this pursuit. She can ask her academic advisor for help in formulating a schedule that is reasonable. She can go to the campus Writing Center for help with sentence structure, grammar and paper writing. She can talk with a campus counselor about test anxiety and learn some tricks to overcome this stressful affliction. One bad semester doesn't have to be the end of the world!

And, if your student did well academically this fall, she's likely putting some pressure on herself to live up to that success. Quality work is one thing to strive for while perfection can be too much pressure. Students need to take academic risks sometimes in order to learn well and expand their horizons. So, if your student says she wants to try a language course instead of the tried-and-true music theory class that she knows she can likely get an "A" in, it may be worth the risk. She knows what kinds of subjects pique her interest—and a student who is inter-

Where Should I Study?

One thing your student may have discovered about himself is that he needs a certain kind of environment to study effectively. You can encourage him to take a good, hard look at where he can maximize his study time by considering places such as:

- ➔ The library
 - ➔ The laundry room
 - ➔ His room
 - ➔ Study lounges
 - ➔ The (student government, newspaper, etc.) office after-hours
 - ➔ The commuter lounge
 - ➔ The dining hall
 - ➔ The interfaith center
- Just encourage him not to study in an area that is too isolated because that could put his safety at risk.

ested and engaged is more likely to learn and retain information than one who is just coasting along.

Academics are your student's main reason for being in school. And with your encouragement, her commitment and the assistance of campus professionals, she can make this a positive, learning-filled semester.

Cultural Conversations

Tap into upcoming celebrations

Jan. 16, 2006 honors Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Jan. 29, 2006 is the beginning of the Chinese New Year

And Black History Month is coming up in February.

Chances are that there will be campus celebrations of some kind to honor one or all of these. Take this opportunity to talk with your student about what's happening on campus and what he or she is learning. What did he get out of the MLK Jr. speech given by a member of student government? What Black History Month activities is she planning to attend or is she helping to organize? And does he know what 2006 is according to the Chinese zodiac (it's the Year of the Dog)? Meaningful cultural conversations can begin simply by asking, "What's happening this month on campus?"

*** Note: Check your campus website for activity listings, too.*

It's never too early to start thinking about the future

Career Concerns

Many students don't set foot in the campus Career Center until they're a senior, frantic to get their résumé critiqued so they can find a job. It's wise, however, to visit this helpful office early on—even during the first year—because career counselors can help students get on track and explore career options they may not have known about otherwise.

Jobs within Different Majors. For instance, many career offices offer helpful lists of “What You



Can Do with a ___ Major.” If your student is a biology major, does she know about options beyond the lab? She can work for an environmental group, take a job in a zoo, teach, be a sci-

ence writer and so much more.

Personal Career Inventories. Your student can also take a career inventory or two to identify possible interests. Many of these personal surveys can be done online, right in the career center. And the trained professionals within the office can help students go over their results and determine their next steps.

A Career File. Opening a career file makes sense, too. This is a way for your student to develop a relationship with one of the career counselors and to start a personal paper trail. This file might include letters of recommendation for summer jobs/internships, inventory results, résumé drafts and more. Why not start now?

Resources Aplenty. The career center is also chock full of resources! Spending an hour in this office flip-

Job Prep

To prepare for filling out job applications and preparing a résumé, students should be able to:

- ✓ List their previous employers with contact names, addresses and phone numbers.
- ✓ List their dates of employment in chronological order.
- ✓ List the accurate names and dates of awards they've received.
- ✓ List various community service/volunteer efforts, along with accurate dates and agency/organization names.

Having these pieces of information readily on hand will help your student be able to easily fill out an application at a moment's notice.

ping through books, magazines and journals is time well spent.

So, encourage your student to make an appointment at the career center this semester. The earlier the better, before the center gets bombarded with juniors and seniors in a frenzy. Help your student *not* be one of these frantic upperclassmen. Instead, he'll be a well-informed, well-prepared student taking control of his own destiny.

A Tax Time Reminder

The advent of a new year means that tax paperwork will soon be arriving. So, if you are still involved in your student's tax return preparation, you'll need to gather those incoming W-2s from on- or off-campus jobs. Talk about exchanging these forms now so that they don't get lost in the jumble of your student's busy life.

And, if your student does his own tax return, encourage him to check into campus tax resources. Some organizations offer free tax preparation assistance to students. The accounting department may offer help, too. Students who learn to do their own taxes are acquiring a lifetime skill.

Start preparing now... April 15 will arrive sooner that you think!

Publication 970 (2005), Tax Benefits for Education

The IRS offers an online guide to possible tax benefits for education. The publication:

- Explains the taxability of various types of educational assistance such as scholarships, fellowships and tuition reductions.
- Explains educational benefits such as the Hope credit, the lifetime learning credit and 10 others (i.e. possible deduction of tuition and fees, participation in qualified tuition program).
- Goes in-depth when it comes to reminders, who is eligible and more.

Check it out at <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p970/index.html>. You can also visit www.irs.gov or call 1-800-829-1040 with further questions.

Putting off 'til tomorrow what needs to be done today!

The Tendency to Procrastinate

Many students are afflicted with the procrastination tendency. Up to 70 percent of them identify as procrastinators, according to *Psychology Today* (Oct. 28, 2003). It's what keeps them up all night cramming or finishing papers. It's what causes them to tell you they'll do something but not follow through. It's an affliction with both mental and physical impacts.

Procrastination isn't just a form of laziness. It comes about for a variety of reasons, including:

- ➔ avoiding negative experiences
- ➔ depression
- ➔ self-judgment
- ➔ anticipating the worst
- ➔ a need for love
- ➔ perfectionism
- ➔ a rigid identity
- ➔ fear of others' response
- ➔ a lack of training

- ➔ low tolerance for frustration
- ➔ being passive
- ➔ hostility
- ➔ not feeling like life is fair
- ➔ being overextended

While many of us have procrastination tendencies, it doesn't necessarily mean we are full-fledged procrastinators. Some of us may simply be putting way too much on our daily To Do lists. Dr. Joseph Ferrari, an associate professor of psychology at DePaul University (IL), told *Psychology Today* (Oct. 28, 2003) that real procrastinators do five telltale things:

1. Underestimate how much time it'll take to get something done.
2. Overestimate the amount of time they have left to get something done.
3. Overestimate how motivated they'll feel the "next time" when they expect they'll get something done.
4. Mistakenly believe that working when they're not in the mood is less than optimal.
5. Mistakenly believe that, in order to succeed at a task, they need to feel like doing it.

We've all seen procrastinators do everything but what they need to be doing, whether it's checking email, going out, taking on other projects or finding people and



tasks to distract them.

To help students deal with procrastination and develop healthier habits, many campuses have developed online support mechanisms. For instance, the Academic Learning Lab at Ohio State offers an online Procrastinators'

Support Center to help people who procrastinate. This website at <http://dennislearningcenter.osu.edu/dontdelay/> offers the following:

- ➔ Procrastination busting techniques
- ➔ A "That's Me, That's Not Me" quiz
- ➔ Last-minute study tips
- ➔ Guidelines for making a Q&A outline
- ➔ Ideas for dealing with test anxiety
- ➔ A sample weekly time chart
- ➔ A weekly Self-Talk form
- ➔ A plan to beat procrastination
- ➔ Ideas for taking breaks

This semester, resolve to help the procrastinators in your life. You'll be helping them develop skills that will serve them well into the future.

Sources: "Ending Procrastination," Psychology Today, Oct. 28, 2003; "Procrastination and Time Management," University of Oregon Counseling and Testing Center, <http://darkwing.oregon.edu/~counsel/procrastination.htm>; The Procrastinators' Support Center at Ohio State, <http://dennislearningcenter.osu.edu/dontdelay/>

Procrastination Resources

- ✦ **University at Buffalo—Counseling Services** • <http://ub-counseling.buffalo.edu/stressprocrast.shtml>
- ✦ **Rock Valley College—Student Services** • <http://www.rockvalleycollege.edu/show.cfm?durki=694>
- ✦ **Kalamazoo College—Student Development** • <http://www.kzoo.edu/counsel/procrastination.htm>
- ✦ **Xavier University—The Learning Assistance Center** • <http://www.xu.edu/lac/Procrastination.htm>
- ✦ **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign—Counseling Center** • <http://www.couns.uiuc.edu/Brochures/procras.htm>
- ✦ **University of Oregon—Counseling and Testing Center** • <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~counsel/procrastination.htm>

